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Narrative Trajectory of the Self-Manifesting Divine

In Boehme's mature work, which belongs to the incredibly fertile final five years of his life (1619–1624), what is articulated by pneumatically informed reason (*Verstand*), is nothing more nor less than the dynamics of the self-manifesting or self-revealing divine. As will be the case with Hegel and Schelling later, not only is divine revelation the condition for the possibility of theological insight, but the divine is the process of revelation. There is nothing accidental about this process. Revelation or manifestation is essential, and describes the path the divine takes towards full self-appropriation.

Six stages can be distinguished in the narrative enactment of divine manifestation that bear on divine self-constitution: (1) The radically transcendent divine, both mysterious and undifferentiated, gives way to divine self-manifestation and differentiation in eternal Wisdom (*die ewige Weisheit*) and the 'Immanent Trinity.'[1] (2) A teleologically engendered divine fall into a sphere of being radically other than the divine at once interrupts manifestation and makes it really possible, by serving as the refracting background of a form of divine light ultimately more real because of the tension between the refusal of manifestation and manifestation. (3) The fall of the dramatically realized divine world or community, provoked by Lucifer, leads to the creation of the temporal world (as an expression of the eternal tension) and human being (as the image of God). (4) Human being destroys the divine image (Adamic fall), due to a repetition of Lucifer's abortive exercise of freedom. (5) Christ appears both as the Second Adam and as the paradigm of rebirth, resignation, and wholeness, appropriatable by a sinful but unvitiated humanity. (6) History as salvation history, stretching from creation to apocalypse, is a movement of return to origins, proximally to Eden, but ultimately to the paradisiacal state lost in the Lucifernian fall. Descriptions of each of these six stages will be brief, and analyses will be kept at a minimum.

A relatively underdetermined account of Boehme's narrative sets the table for the interpretation of Boehme that begins in section two of this chapter,

continues in Part II of my analysis of the comprehensive and radical nature of Boehme's departure from mainline Christian discourses, and concludes in Part III. There I make a taxonomic decision regarding the genre of Boehme's narrative discourse. I begin with the first stage of Boehme's narrative, which is as much prologue to narrative adventure as narrative adventure itself. The complexities of this preliminary stage are such, however, that with the exception of the second stage, I will tarry longer with it than with any of the other stages.

1.1. Boehme's Six-Stage Narrative

(1) *(An)archeology: Unground: Wisdom: 'Immanent Trinity'*

When Boehme considers the divine infinite outside any actual relation to determination and finitude, the most comprehensive symbol of which is the *Unground*,[2] he betrays the press of the negative theology tradition on his thought. In keeping with this tradition, Boehme does not eschew altogether kataphatic vocabulary when speaking of the transcendent divine. The divine is the being of beings (*Wesen des Wesens*) (*MM* 1, 2; 1, 6), the one and simple (*MM* 1, 2; 1, 6; 29, 1; *De Electione Gratiae* [*EG*] 1, 3), the eternal good (*MM* 3, 2; *Clavis* #2; [De Incarnatione Verbi (*IV*) bk 2. 5, 34), root (*MM* 1, 8; 60, 38), and light (*IV* bk 2. 3, 4). In the final analysis, however, apophatic vocabulary is the more predominant and powerful. The transcendent divine is nameless (*ohne Namen*) (*MM* 1, 8; 60, 38), ungraspable (*unbegreiflich*), inexpressible (*unaussprechlich*), beyond nature (*ausser der Natur*) (*MM* 60, 38), not an essence (*MM* 1, 6), hiddenness (*Verborgenheit*), and beyond beginning (*unanfängliche*) (*MM* 1, 8). Boehme is even willing to support the most extreme apophatic cipher countenanced by the German mystical tradition—that is, nothing (*Nichts*). But the language of "nothing" only makes explicit what is implicit in the language of oneness and undifferentiation—that is, the nonrelationality and immanifestation of the divine: "When I consider what God is, then I say: He is himself but one; with reference to the creature an eternal nothing" (*MM* 1, 3; also *MM* 1, 2; 1, 8; 29, 1; *EG* 1, 2-3; *SPT* 1. 1, 2; 1. 1, 4; 1.1, 7; *De Signatura Rerum* [*SR*] 2, 8–9).[3]

Obviously, as is typical in the negative theology tradition when applied to God, "nothing" is not absolute nothing. This point is made in a startlingly perceptive analysis of Boehme by Dionysius Andreas Freher, an eighteenth-century London emigré.[4] It is provided a precise technical expression when Berdyaev argues that Boehme's "nothing" bears more relation to Plato's *me on* than Parmenides's *ouk on*.[5]

Yet Boehme sees the possibility, even necessity, of movement from the Unground toward a ground, the movement from mystery to manifestation that

will introduce differentiation and multiplicity into the divine. All the texts of Boehme's mature periods devote crucial chapters to this movement. They sometimes speak of it as something that happens to the Unground, sometimes as the very act of the Unground itself. In addition, without judging the value of the movement from Unground to ground, there appear to be distinct overall ways of characterizing the movement. One important line of characterization is *aesthetic*. Specifically, the movement is from a divine infinite, conceived as formless, even chaotic, to a divine that has form and definite limits, a divine, which, availing it of the metaphorics of space, is bounded.

Boehme writes:

> For the vast infinite space desires narrowness and enclosure wherein it may manifest itself, otherwise in the wide stillness there would be no manifestation; therefore there must be attracting or enclosing, out of which manifestation appears. (*De Triplici Vita Hominis* (*The Threefold Life* [*TL*] 1, 33; also *MM* 17, 23)

Another crucially important line of characterization is that of vision, which on Boehmian first principles is not a possibility of a unitary and simple divine. The vision of the Unground is a nonvision, its eye an eye that does not see, for vision and seeing are possible only if there is distinction between seer and seen, or subject and object (*MM* 1, 7; *EG* 1, 6; 1.8; *SPT* 1. 1, 7–8). The aesthetic and visionary characterizations are mutually reinforcing. An anaesthetic, monistic, and apophatic divine is essentially a cyclopean divine; nonvision is the kind of vision appropriate to the formlessness and indeterminacy of the divine nothing. Contrariwise, a determinate divine infinite is a self-reflective infinite, while visionary self-reflection supposes the multiplicity of representation that limits the divine and provides it with determinacy.

Differentiation (*Schiedlichkeit*)[6] is, therefore, the means by which the Unground moves toward determinateness that has ontological, axiological, and existential, as well, of course, as gnoseological dimensions (*Theosophic Fragments* [*TF*] 3. 6, 7). Boehme accounts for more than one register of differentiation. As it turns out, more than one register is required for a divine that is aesthetic and visionary. Boehme distinguishes between a preliminary nonagonic form and a fully developed *agonic* form, for which he coins the term the *contrarium* (*MM* 3, 4; 4, 19; *SR* 2, 2; *Theosopia* [Divine Intuition (*DI*)*]* 1, 8–11, 1, 19ff).[7] This preliminary register of differentiation itself takes two forms, the first of which is binary and involves the emergence of eternal Wisdom (*die ewige Weisheit*) as the projection (*Gegendwurf*) of the Unground (*DI* 3, 6).[8] This binary division is often spoken of in terms of the images of eye and mirror (*SPT* 1.1, 7; 1. 1, 11–12). The images are intended to render the split between seer and seen impossible on the level of the undifferentiated divine, and thus gesture toward

divine consciousness and self-consciousness. In a secondary way, the images also render the possibility of multiplicity and totality, for upon the mirror of Wisdom are reflected archetypes of all things. Wisdom is the great mystery (*mysterium magnum*) as the repository of all things in their archetypal invisible form.[9] Boehme is quick to point out, however, that the archetypes lack stability and definition, and that their appearing and disappearing seem to suggest a dream state rather than a state of vision in which archetypes are the objective correlative of powerful divine seeing (*TF* 2, 13; *MM* 1, 6–7; *SPT* 1. 1, 8). As the eternal feminine, Wisdom does not appear to be what Novalis later wishes her to be—that is, a matrix or mother.[10] As Boehme suggests time and again, Wisdom or Sophia is a "virginlike matrix" (*SPT* 1. 1, 61-62; *IV* bk. 2. 5, 47).[11] Wisdom opens up the possibility of the real birth of difference and otherness, but does not accomplish it. Wisdom is not a gynecontotheological source, or Wisdom is only a pregynecontotheological source.

The second form of the first register of differentiation that trajects the divine beyond hiddenness, and in some respects overcomes its simplicity and agnosia, is trinitarian. Trinitarian differentiation is the exegetical result of a reading of John 1.1–3:

> For 'in the beginning' means the eternal beginning in the will of the Unground for a ground, that is, for a divine apprehension, since the will apprehends itself in a center for foundation. For the will apprehends itself in the one power, and breathes itself forth. . . . This amounts to saying the Word was in the beginning with God and was God himself. The will is the beginning and is called God the Father, and he apprehends himself in power and is called the Son. (*EG* 2, 7–11; also *MM* 2, 1)

As with Wisdom, the Word plays the role of providing the divine with a provisional ground of manifestation. Relative to the formless sublime of the Unground, the Word represents the introduction of an aesthetic horizon, and relative to the divine nothing, which is visionless, or at best cyclopean in vision, the Word is a site of some kind of reflexivity. Higher degrees of aesthetic or iconic configuration of the divine are hinted at, as are higher degrees of reflexivity. In the context of the Word's providing some kind of ground for manifestation, Spirit appears in the role of an adjunct—namely that of further articulating what is implicit in the ground.

Boehme's mode of expression is more declarative in *Mysterium Magnum* where he sets off trinitarian manifestation against the backdrop of the hiddenness of the Unground: "In the eternal generation there are three things: (1) an eternal will; (2) an eternal mind (*ein ewige Gemüthe*) of the will; and (3) an eternal emanation (*Ausgang*) from the will and mind" (*MM* 1, 3; also *MM* 2, 1; *EG* 1, 6).

And in the immediately following paragraph (*MM* 1, 4), Boehme identi-fies 1, 2, and 3 respectively with "Father, Son, and Spirit." For Boehme, it is clear that it is the dynamic of differentiation-manifestation that is truly pri-mary. The creedal language of "Father, Son, and Spirit" only approximately register this dynamic of manifestation. It proves misleading to the extent to which it signifies three persons, which, for Boehme, before Hegel and Rah-ner,[12] suggests three distinct centers of consciousness or self-consciousness (*MM* 7, 5; 7, 11).

But if focus on the dynamic of manifestation tends to undermine a per-sonal interpretation of Trinity, reflection on the stage of manifestation realized at this level of differentiation makes the language of essence itself problematic. Determining that essence (*Wesen*) implies life and energy, Boehme rules that essence is an unhelpful category when applied to this incipient stage of divine manifestation. An important passage in *Mysterium Magnum* expresses this paradoxically by saying that the threefold Spirit (*dieser dreifache Geist*) is one essence and thus no essence (*kein Wesen ist*) (*MM* 1, 5; also *MM* 1, 6; *SPT* 1. 1, 29). What Boehme offers by way of explanation—namely, that the matrix of the 'Immanent Trinity' is a search for something (*Ichts*)—and to a considerable extent also an 'I' (*Ich*)—does not seem enlightening on the surface, yet it is suf-ficiently informative to enable translation. What Boehme is saying is that while one can call the trinitarian dynamic one essence insofar as it is a determinate and determinable process of differentiation and manifestation, in an absolute sense this trinitarian dynamic does not constitute an essence in that this dy-namic does not bring about a determinate divine life. Simply put, the threefold life is not the God that creates and preserves, judges and forgives, suffers and redeems. The God of trinitarian process is still disengaged, while yet laying down conditions of engagement.

I will return to make a final comment on the nonessential nature of the 'Immanent Trinity' shortly, but before I do so a few words need to be said about the voluntarist contextualization of the Trinity and Wisdom and their relation.

The voluntarist dimension of the 'Immanent Trinity' is apparent in the above-quoted passage from *De Electione Gratiae* (2.1), in which the Father is identified as the will of the Unground for a ground and the Son is taken to be the finding of a ground. But Wisdom also has a voluntarist context. Wisdom is what is projected by the will of the Unground as the screen or mirror of possi-bilities—one might say with Leibniz in mind, the mirroring of possible worlds. As suggested already, there are two patterns in which the extreme voluntarism of Boehme's theosophical system gets registered. The first more nearly belongs to the order of myth and privileges event (*IV* bk 2. 2, 2). The second is more nearly philosophical and thinks of the process of manifestation as an explication of what is already implied in the divine mystery. In the first case, will is conceived as a breakthrough into the Unground as an absolutely quiescent eternity (*die*

stille Ewigkeit) (*SR* 2, 8; 2, 18). The second understands the Unground as still and quiescent more subjunctively than indicatively, more as an object of thought than as a real state of the divine, for the divine Unground is always already the will for ground. Will, therefore, is both something that the superessential Unground suffers and what it is. Arguably, it is the second of these two forms that dominates. In any event, it is the second of these two forms that exercises significant influence in the history of philosophy, in Schelling primarily, but through Schelling, Schopenhauer, and through Schopenhauer even Nietzsche.[13]

Whether sophiological or trinitarian, Boehme's voluntarist rendering of a divine that is relatively rather than absolutely transcendent, because incipiently archeological, is theologically distinctive. Yet it is important not to dismiss the noetic accompaniment of will and its gnoseological aim. In Wisdom and Word, which Boehme declines to fuse as much of the Christian tradition had done, by refusing to exegetically link Proverbs 8.22 with John 1.1-3, the divine finds both a center and a modicum of self-reflection. Similarity in noetic specification of will raises the issue of the relation between the sophiological and trinitarian modes of differentiation. Boehme, it should be said, is anything but decisive in determining which of the two modes is the more primitive.[14] Some texts favor the sophiological mode, others the trinitarian. And in *Mysterium Magnum* Boehme begins his text (chapter 1) favoring the trinitarian pattern, only to reverse course in chapter 29, when he turns once again to the initial move by the Unground toward a ground, mystery toward manifestation. At this juncture the sophiological mode is given primacy. When Berdyaev claims in 'Unground and Freedom' that the two modes of differentiation are not contradictory, and that, ultimately, trinitarian articulation with divine Wisdom shapes a Quaternity, he is undoubtedly correct. But his judgment can only be assigned the status of a protocol, for in his Quaternity ruling he makes no attempt to sort out the important issue of which of the two modes of differentiation is antecedent, which consequent.

Although Boehme risks incoherence, the short answer to the question of anteriority-posteriority is that the sophiological and trinitarian modes of differentiation are in some respects both antecedent and consequent. The doubleness common to both trinitarian and sophiological modes of differentiation can be illuminated by considering the role of Wisdom in the more complex quaternarian structure. Wisdom can be regarded as the hint of tear in the divine mystery that makes possible subsequent elaboration of manifestation. It opens a space for meaning, which is then articulated by Word as the ground of manifestation and spirit as its differentiation. Regarded in this way, Wisdom is archeological, because it connotes a beginning of manifestation, but still an *arche* very much within the anarchic and meontological pull of the Unground.[15] But Wisdom can also be regarded as the objectification of the Unground, now understood dynamically as ungrounded will, and specified and differentiated by

a trinitarian dynamic. Though one might have preferred Boehme to have lexically marked off objectification both "before" and "after" trinitarian articulation by different terms, it is evident that Jung is correct in his insight, if not his formulation, when he suggests that Boehme supplements the Trinity by a fourth hypostasis. For finally what is important about Wisdom is that it offers an image of a possible world of integrated particulars, something that becomes clearer when Boehme moves beyond his treatment of this first level of divine manifestation and takes up the issue of the Kingdom of God.

It is obvious that Boehme puts the level of ontological, gnoseological, but also axiological and existential determinacy of the entire quaternarian sphere of divine self-manifestation into question. The Word or "Son" appears to be more a ground of the ground of manifestation than a ground proper, and Wisdom appears to be more a sketch of the totality than the totality itself. While in different ways both Word and Wisdom indicate representation and reflexivity, the incidence is, for better or worse, not particularly high, since differentiation is differentiation of the same, and does not involve true otherness. Correlatively, the mode of existence, or what might be called "sensibility,"[16] appropriate to a divine functioning at this ontological and gnoseological level is palpably without pathos of any kind. Goodness is what defines itself self-referentially—that is, without reference to evil, possible or actual.

Boehme determines that the quaternarian differentiation of the divine is limited because it lacks "essence" or "nature." For the divine to have different, and more significant, ontological, gnoseological, axiological, and existential values involves a move from a sphere of differentiation still beset by the superessential, haunted by monism and the specter of nothing, where reflection and language cannot receive even an adumbration, to a sphere of differentiation—a second register—that involves real difference. The manifestation of the divine, as opposed to divine self-manifestation at the level of the Quaternity, supposes a "fall" into nature and essence.

(2) *Engendering a Divine Nature: The Configuration of Divine Attributes*:

For Boehme Eternal Nature (*die ewige Natur*) is not to be confused with material or temporal nature (*MM* 3, 20).[17] Eternal Nature is the nondivine other to the Unground and the quaternarian differentiation of divine self-manifestation. It is at once the antitype of Wisdom and a dramatic specification of will articulated by the Word—indeed, the Trinity as a whole. As an antitype to Wisdom, Eternal Nature is that virulent realm of antidivine reality that occludes representation and blocks reflection. It is a realm of nonknowledge, entirely different from the agnosia of the Unground, a sphere of nonbeing, yet a form of nonbeing different from the divine nothing. If both the Unground and Eternal Nature can be regarded as species of *me on*, the non-Parmenidean nothing of the Unground is that of possible, even potential, being, whereas that of

Eternal Nature represents the refusal of the relationality and spiritual complete-ness of being. By contrast with the "chaos" of Wisdom (*Clavis* #48–52), which aesthetically circumscribes a horizon of archetypal being, Eternal Nature is an anti-aesthetic chaos, a chaos that is aggressively formless.

I will return to Eternal Nature's status as antitype to Wisdom, but before I do I should say something about Eternal Nature's relation to the axis of will upon which the Quaternity in general, and the Trinity in particular, is plotted. If the 'Immanent Trinity,' for instance, is constituted by will (*Wille*), Eternal Nature is constituted by desire (*Sucht*) (*SPT* 1. 1, 37; 2.27; *IV* bk 2. 3, 13–18; *Mysterium Pansophicum* [*MP*] 3, 4; *SR* 4, 5).[18] Desire is a form of counterwill (*Wieder Wille*) (*TF* 4, 16), contractive rather than expansive.[19] Its direction is centripetal rather than centrifugal. Desire represents, however, the emergence of a force of will sufficiently substantial to create realities rather than schemas that reflect an ontological force described as "thin" (*dun*) as a nothing (*TL* 1, 29; *SPT* 1. 2, 24). One especially interesting way in which desire relates to the vol-untarist sphere that "precedes" it gets focused in the discourse of imagination or "magic" (*MP* 1 and 2; *IV* bk 2. 2, 19; 3, 20). As it functions in the quaternarian sphere, imagination is the coincidence of the active will to manifestation and the passive screen upon which will projects its schemas and possibilities. To the extent to which the goal is the production of real otherness—and self-reflection based on otherness—at this level of divine manifestation, imagination fails to be creative. Required is that "self-darkening of will" (*die Selbstverfinsterung des Willens*) referred to by Grunsky,[20] provided by desire, which transforms a divine magic that lacks ontological correlatives into an imagination that has them. One might say, having Coleridge in mind, that desire transforms fantasy into imagination proper.[21]

Having its origin in desire, Eternal Nature introduces a ground of real dif-ference and multiplicity into the divine of which both Word and Wisdom, in the quaternarian sphere, are incapable. The contrast between Wisdom and Eternal Nature is especially important, and is articulated in the distinction be-tween the oxymoron of a "virgin matrix" and the real matrix. Eternal Nature is a pregnant source of being from which a teeming multiplicity emerges. It is precisely what Novalis's great aphorism suggests Nature is: the great womb of revelation (*der Offenbarung mächtigen Schloss*).[22]

Introducing real multiplicity reflects the inauguration of a new sphere of differentiation. In the quaternarian sphere differentiation is differentiation of the same: a differentiation of a light or clarity that has no contrast. Eternal Na-ture sets in motion differentiation by contradiction: a differentiation between sources of darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge, or as Boehme some-times says, the conflict of *Ens* and *Mens*.[23] And while ultimately Eternal Nature does prove instrumental in the issue of an ontological and gnoseological posi-tive, in the short term it is a sphere of creative proliferation without rhyme or

reason, a sphere of ignorance and nonreflection (*MP* 3, 1; *SPT* 1.1, 49). As a sphere of essence (*Wesen*), it is a sphere of life (*Leben*) (*De Tribus Principiis* [*TP*] 2, 1; *TL* 1, 24), but as it turns out, it is a dark, poisonous (*giftige*), hellish life (*IV* bk 2. 3, 16; 2.2, 48; *SPT* 1. 2, 38). Eternal Nature brings into the divine the possibility of evil, if not evil itself, and existence as the restlessness for being rather than its realization.

The insight about the struggle at the heart of reality between the forces of dark and light, evil and good, is there already in *Aurora* (1612) (preface #8, 18).[24] It is however only in the context of Boehme's mature work that the struggle is explicated in terms of the problematic of divine manifestation and the conditions that must be satisfied if the divine is to be a divine involved with a world. Eternal Nature, however negatively characterizable, brings about essence without which nothing can exist (*ohne Wesen nicht bestehen mag*) (*TP* 1, 27), and without which manifestation cannot occur. But Eternal Nature is the necessary rather than sufficient condition of manifestation that leads to divine self-reflection (*TP* 2, 1; *IV* bk 2. 3, 16). Eternal Nature makes manifestation possible precisely by obstructing it and engendering a recoil (*MM* 25 [28 in English]; 26, 10, 36-38, 58). It can rightly be called a source (*Urkund*) or root (*Wurzel*) of manifestation, which truly occurs only when its darkness, substantiality, involution, compulsiveness, and even pain give way to light, spiritual being, eccentricity, freedom, and joy (*MM* 4, 17).

To underscore the agon between Eternal Nature and the space of manifestation proper—which is variously, concretely and abstractly, associated with Christ and Eternal Freedom—Boehme avails himself of the language of "Principle." He assigns to Eternal Nature the status of First Principle, and assigns to its contrary, which is grounded in it, the status of Second Principle. Despite the Manichaeanlike evocation in the language of principle, as well as the fact that the Second Principle is regarded as defeating the First Principle (*MM* 40, 8), the conflict between the Principles of Darkness and Light cannot be interpreted in a Manichaean fashion. First, in Boehme the two Principles are not absolutely originary. They have as their presupposition the Unground and the Quaternity. Second, they are not coeval despite occasional suggestions to the contrary such as the following: "The wrathfulness and the painful source is the root of joy, and the joy is the root of the enmity of the dark wrathfulness. So that there is a contrarium, whereby the good is manifest and made known that it is good" (*MM* 4, 17).[25]

In making each the "root" of the other, Boehme does seem to announce that dependence is a two-way street. Nevertheless, even in this passage, which is somewhat exceptional, there are hints of asymmetry. At the end of the citation it is evident that Boehme's focus is on the Good Principle being grounded or rooted in the "Evil" Principle (also *MM* 5, 7). A fairly easy way of making sense of the passage, however, is to suppose that Boehme understands "root" in

two different ways. The First Principle is the root of the Second Principle as its narrative presupposition. The Second Principle is the root of the First Principle only in the order of finality. The First Principle is ordered toward the reality of the Second Principle, and plays a crucial role in bringing it about.[26]

I will return to the specifically agonistic features of the conflict between Principles momentarily, but first I will say a few words about Boehme's technical understanding of "Principle." A Principle represents a domain of essence (*Wesen*), thus a dimension of existence radically distinct from the Unground and the Quaternity. Crucially, however, Principle is a domain of life (*Leben*). Principles, then, are the sources of the living God of biblical depiction, rather than the God of the philosophers, characterized by aseity. As a thinker within the Lutheran tradition, perhaps not surprisingly Boehme characterizes the life of the First Principle by wrath (*Zorn*), fierceness (*Grimmigkeit*), and sternness (*Schwerigkeit*), and the life of the Second Principle by mercy (*Barmhertzigkeit*) and love (*Liebe*). But, importantly, Principles are Principles of life only in relation. This is obvious in the case of the Second Principle, which depends essentially on the First. But it is also true of the First Principle, which truly comes to life only in the transition to the Second Principle. Before this transition the First Principle is lifeless as well as entropic.

Transition is the fire that brings it to life—that introduces, one might say, genuine negativity into the divine. Or to use Boehme's own language: fire is the ignition of life (*die Anzundung des Lebens*) (*IV* bk 2. 3, 16; bk 2. 2, 36; bk 2. 2, 44). If fire is generated by the friction and internal contradictions of the First Principle, nevertheless, it qualifies the First Principle in the same way it qualifies the Second. If the Second Principle is a "light fire," the first is a "dark fire," where the matter of the fire is supplied by the chaos of Eternal Nature which needs to be purified. Though Boehme contrasts fire and light, and tends to think of this contrast as the contrast between the Father and the Son, the truly structural contrast is that of dark and light, or dark and light fire.

It is important to focus on what the transition says about the divine. The extraordinary reflection on the process of transition presented in *De Signatura Rerum* is illustrative. There Boehme imagines the transition as the movement from death to life, pain to joy, what Jung, meditating on alchemical traditions, calls *enantiodromia*.[27] As we will see shortly more clearly, pain is present at the level of Eternal Nature. It comes to light, however, in the transition. Transition itself is painful in a somewhat different way. Its pain is a little like the metaphysical pain Heidegger sees in Trakl—that is, pain as separation, cutting off, de-scission.[28] In chapter 5 of *De Signatura Rerum*, transition is thought of as a double movement of forward and up, and figured as a vertical line, representing the ascending movement from death to life, bisecting a horizontal line, representing the forward movement of manifestation. Thus, a Cross gets shaped that functions staurologically—that is, functions to block and separate a dimension

of higher reality from a lower.[29] In fact, Boehme has no compunction about denying divine status to the First Principle, and insisting that God is God only in the Second Principle (*MM* 8, 14; *TP* 1, 2; 1, 8). Yet once again, as later assimilations of Boehme by Schelling and Berdyaev indicate,[30] Boehme's position is not Manichaean. True, the First Principle is antagonistic to the Second, and in that sense antidivine. But there is something pre about the anti, even if the activation of this sphere of existence necessarily introduces evil.

For Boehme, the two Principles differentiate into triads of divine qualities (*Qualitäten*), with a transition quality between them. Qualities play the role divine attributes do in most ontotheological systems, but as the best Boehme scholars have recognized, a quality in this system of divine expressiveness is more than an attribute. Along the dynamic, voluntarist axis qualities are dynamic expressions of divine life. Something of the difference between attribute and quality is graspable in the etymological roots of *Qualität*. One of these roots is *Quellen* or *Quell*, which points to a surging, pulsating force. Another is *Quall* or *Quahl*, which means "pain."[31] From *Aurora* (1612) on, Boehme thinks of qualities as the powers of expression in God that get manifested in the temporal-material world. Far from being a logical or conceptual entity with real or problematic reference, a quality is a surging power (*ein quellende Kraft*) (*Aurora* 1, 3) and the mobility, surge, and drive of things (*die Bewiglichkeit, Quellen und der Trieben eines Dinges*) (1, 3). And from the second part of the text (chapters 8ff.) the number is established as seven, largely, though not exclusively, predicated on the reading of Scripture,[32] with particular debts to *Revelation* (the seven lamps of chapter 1, the seven eyes or spirits sent forth of chapter 5) and *Genesis* (the seven days of creation).

What does represent a development in the mature work is the clarification of what might be called the narrative, but not necessarily temporal, order of the qualities. Boehme insists that the emergence of the qualities cannot be understood in the temporal manner of "before" and "after" (*Aurora* 23, 15ff.). At the same time, however, the qualities are not merely juxtaposed or simply structurally related. They constitute an indescerptible string arranged in an irreversible narrative order. This should come as no surprise: narrative irreversibility will be a property of the qualities as it is a property of the Principles the qualities articulate. The qualities also reinforce the tension within the divine between the negative and the positive, no and yes. Boehme avails himself of multiple vocabularies, including the not especially helpful vocabulary of sensation—"hot," "cold," "bitter," "sour," "sweet" (belonging to the undeveloped stratum of alchemy) (*Aurora* 8–11) as well as a vocabulary of "salt," "mercury," and "sulphur" (*MM* 10), (belonging to alchemy's more reflective stratum).[33] Linguistic impediments notwithstanding, it is clear that Boehme intends to name nonphysical forces instrumental in divine becoming that will eventually find expression in the visible world. The triads of qualities that articulate the

Principles seem to represent different parsings of form, mobility, and life, specifically imploding form (1), directionless movement (2), and angst (3), on the one hand, perfection of form (7), meaning-giving movement of word (6), and love (5), on the other. Between these two triads lies the transition quality of fire (4), which plays the role of chiasmus between the two sets, pairing 1 and 7, 2 and 6, 3 and 5.

In and through the qualities, the divine defines itself in terms of being, knowledge, value, and experience, or specifically as a divine that, as spirit, represents the unsurpassable realization of reality, unsurpassable self-consciousness premised on consciousness and its intentionality, the acme of a goodness that is tried and strengthened by evil, and a divine whose experience is ultimately determined by joy that could not be what it is without the background of suffering. Now, while all the properties of the Second Principle can be appropriated to Christ, this is especially true of the fifth quality, that of love. As Word and speech, the sixth quality also evokes the Son. However, the pneumatological resonance here is often loud, especially in *Mysterium Magnum* and *De Electione Gratiae*.[34]

Of all the qualities that articulate the Second Principle, it is the seventh, which corresponds to the first, that is the most interesting, for there is an obvious correlation with Wisdom whose archetypal world of possibility is deranged in the chaos introduced by Eternal Nature. The seventh quality is the "heavenly Eve," which has gone through the crucible of pain and alienation induced by Eternal Nature. And as the "heavenly Eve" and "New Jerusalem," the seventh quality is the complete world of harmonious divine expression.

(3) *The Emergence of the Temporal World and of Human Being*

The material temporal world is the outcome of a dramatic event of derangement, what Boehme refers to as the *turba* that disturbs the balance between two Principles expressed in the "heavenly Eve" or paradise (*EG* 8, 7–8; *TP* 1, 48).[35] Paradise is the matrix of the unity-in-multiplicity of divine expression, in which love, word, and joy dominate self-will, ignorance, and angst, but partake of their energy and power. Paradise is also the knowing of the divine by what has been "separated" from the divine, where knowing is humble and adorative, and involves a community rather than an individual context. For Boehme, then, paradise, as the angelic realm, is the really real realm of finite glorification of the divine. Human being represents a secondary layer in the doxological milieu, moreover, one predicated on the event of rupture in the order of eternity.

Like Augustine in the *City of God*, or Anselm in *Why God Became Man*, Boehme thinks of the temporal world and human being in particular as ingredients in a doxological replacement. The glorification of the divine in paradise, which in *Aurora* most clearly has Revelation as a background, is cut short by the

act of self-assertion of Lucifer, "son of Light" (*Aurora* 13) who decides against doxological posture (*EG* 4, 29–32).[36] Lucifer's act is an act of counterwill or desire (*MM* 4, 9ff.; *EG* 4, 32) but also an act of imagination, which has as its basic stuff the center of nature as the nuclear force or power of God. The creative property of imagination guarantees that Lucifer becomes what he imagines.[37] This means that heaven and hell are at least as much internal states as objective places, a point that both Milton and Blake can capitalize on later.[38]

Considered as a reality, without the tempering or sublimation of the Second Principle, the First Principle is a chaos. Lucifer contaminates paradise, and his extrusion, which recalls Revelation's fall of the dragon (*MM* 12, 10–12), is the extrusion of the chaotic element. This extruded element is the *tohu va bohu* of Genesis 1 with which the spirit of God wrestles at the beginning of the creation of the material world (*IV* bk 1. 3, 21). At the base of temporal- material nature, therefore, is Lucifer's "no," which cannot fail to be urgent in the physical-material world, and which in *Aurora*, at least, Boehme seems to regard as responsible for all that is negative in nature (e.g., toads, snakes, bad weather, sickness, etc.).

Yet Lucifer's no is not the last word. The material world represents a prison for Lucifer and a defeat of his no, for it is primarily an expression of the divine will to manifestation, the divine yes that demands that light contain darkness and that the Word triumph over the refusal of communication. The visible material world is a signature of the invisible eternal world. It signs both Principles and their tension. Indeed, its meaning is this tension, and what makes it another, or Third Principle (*MM* 3, 20; 13, 9–11; *SR* 14, 8). As a signature of a complex invisible world, the Third Principle is both type and antitype—type in that it expresses the divine as a whole, but also in some respect the divine more narrowly defined by the Second Principle. But for the same reason it is antitype, and again in two different registers. It does not mirror the invisible world as a whole exactly, and it could be understood to mirror the paradisiacal realm so inexactly as to approach the condition of antithesis.

The basic elements of Boehme's reflection on the material world, which Boehme calls the "Spirit of the World" or in a language borrowed from alchemy, the *astrum* (*MM* 13, 10; 13, 16),[39] is contained in his anagogic exegesis of *Genesis*. Later texts like *Mysterium Magnum* (1623) and *De Electione Gratiae* (1623) are lucid in a way *Aurora* is not. The creative word of Genesis indicates a commitment to expressiveness, which is confirmed by the light of the first day of creation. The word is the word of formation through which divine imagination assembles a coherent whole from the confused mass of the beginning. And light represents a kind of fifth element, a *quinta essentia*, from which the elements of fire, air, water, and earth devolve. The Boehmian identification of light as the Principle of the cosmos is important in poetics (e.g., Milton), and, if Derrida is right, in philosophy also.[40] But, for Boehme, light is

not only *arche*; it is also the pivot, since Boehme subscribes to the heliocentric theory of Copernicus that the planets revolve around the sun.[41] It is evident, however, that his reasoning is more metaphysical and theological than physical. The sun is the center because it is the sun that energizes the cosmos (*Aurora* 25, 65). Moreover, it is the sun that seems best to represent the expressiveness of invisible reality indicated by the light that banishes the darkness of chaos as the first act of formation.

Following Genesis, the creation of human being is regarded as the apex of the creative act in the Third Principle. As with much of the exegetical tradition, Boehme stresses the sovereignty of human being (*IV* bk 1, 3, 13; bk 1.4, 7) and its status as microcosm (Epistle 12.7). But Adam is in some respect distinct from temporal nature, since Adam is an image of God, specifically an image of divine will and wisdom (*EG* 1, 15 (*MM* 16, 17). Adam is an image of divine will in two different respects. He has the unconditioned or meontic power to confirm or disconfirm his intentional pattern of giving glory to the divine. He also partakes of the paradisiacal substantiality of the divine (*Sermons* 56, 52; 57, 9)—that is, Wisdom in her perfected aspect. Wisdom is a constitutive aspect of divine image, for it is only in relation to Wisdom—indeed a kind of spousal relation with it (*MM* 18, 17; 25, 14)—that image is divine.

Adam, then, enjoys a perfection of vision (*Blick*), for the perfection of vision is the consequence of participation in Wisdom that is pure noetic as well as pure ontological transparence. In Adam the eternal intersects the temporal, and paradise expresses itself in Eden (*MM* 36 and 39). In the Edenic situation the perfection of knowledge in Adam is a perfection of language, the language of nature.[42] In the Adamic situation language names in an essential fashion. There is no problem of linkup between language and reality, which problem is most forcibly seen in the tower of Babel (*MM* 35–36), but whose career is under way after the fall.

While Boehme is anxious to point to the connection between Adam and paradise as a force that obviates the Lucifernian fall, the image of God is firmly anchored in materiality. The second creation story of Genesis specifies the terrestrial stuff (*limbus*) that forms a basic constituent of Adam (*MM* 16, 7), into which spirit is breathed (*Clavis* #19). Adam is after all microcosm as well as microtheos. Nevertheless, any change in Adam's status has an effect on his material base. Were the image to be withdrawn or vitiated in some way, this would have repercussions on the level of corruptibility. As I will show shortly, Boehme does not disappoint this expectation.

But before I get to Boehme's account of the fall, a fuller description of the Adamic state is in order. Although recognizing the point to be controversial, Boehme believes a thick description of this state, or at least a thicker description than that provided by the mainline theological tradition, and especially his own Lutheran tradition, is possible (*MM* 18, 1). The Adamic state is a state charac-

terized by incorruptibility (*SR* 2, 51), androgyny (*MM* 18, 17–18), angelic re-production that proceeds by way of a kind of cloning (*Forty Questions Concerning the Soul* [*FQ*] 8, 2; *EG* 5, 34), and a form of nonphysical eating that avoids unsavory associative phenomena such as evacuation. All of these characteristics are important and obviously have nothing to do with the depiction of a historical Adam, who is recognizably like his successors in vulnerability and impurity.

Androgyny is especially interesting, since it suggests that Boehme is a link in the Western tradition of esoteric anthropology, but it also suggests that he is a practitioner of a certain kind of exegesis that downplays the historical nature of Adam: he reads the condition of Adam back from Pauline descriptions of the eschaton. In any event, sexual differentiation is not a primal characteristic of human being, but in itself it is a sign of the fall, a point hardly lost on William Blake, as we shall see in a subsequent volume.

(4) *Fall of Adam*

As Boehme depicts it, the fall of Adam has both abrupt and gradual features, a hermeneutic combination formally, if not materially, repeated by Kierkegaard in his *Concept of Anxiety*.[43] The abrupt aspect is the crystalization of counterwill, the self-involution (*Eigenwille*) that recapitulates the Lucifernian no to doxological eccentricity and receptivity. Recapitulated also is the *turba*—the opening up of the chaotic natural forces that split off from paradise as the concrete form of Wisdom. The *turba* certainly points to the exile of the sophiological element in human being, thus the occluding of the divine image. The *turba* has effects on both natural and moral levels that are catastrophic, but arguably less so than on the more absolute plane of eternity, where decision takes the form of a *nunc stans*. With sin, Adam's incorruptibility is withdrawn (*IV* bk 2. 6, 17; *TP* 17, 84), as is his knowledge or vision of divine things (*TP* 16, 22; *EG* 4, 2). Moreover, sin begets sin (*MP* 3, 16ff.). Boehme does not think, however, that human being is totally vitiated (*IV* bk 1.14, 19; *TL* 6, 68), nor that the vision of God thereby becomes impossible for corruptible human being. Rather vision becomes exceptional. The vision (*Blick*) that Adam enjoyed constantly is now possible only in glimpses (*Augenblick*). Real evidence for such glimpses are provided, as Boehme points out in *Mysterium Magnum*, by biblical history in figures such as Shem, Abraham, Moses, Enoch, and Ezekiel. In addition, Augustinian and Reformation views on original sin are denied. For however vitiated a state, the self is postlapsum; it is not the case that human being is incapable of not sinning. There continues to be a real but fragile freedom that can cooperate at least in the renovation of image.[44]

Importantly, however, and not the least from the point of view of Blakean mythopoesis that will be extraordinarily influenced by it, if the fall of Adam is in one sense all at once, in another it is gradual. Adam's act of saying no to God in choosing to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil has

a prehistory in which Adam is robbed of an essential aspect of the divine image—that is, androgyny. Adam's dream in the garden (*TP* 32, 33; *FQ* 8, 3–5), during which God takes a rib and forms Eve, suggests that vision, as well as the wholeness that derives from the indwelling of Sophia as Adam's true spouse, is already in the process of being lost before the definitive refusal of God. The appearance of Eve represents the breakup of androgyny, the loss of innocence, and the appearance of eros and the illusions of its satisfactions (*TP* 13, 39–40; 46, 48).

(5) *Christ: The Savior as Exemplar*

This brings us to Boehme's Christology, with which his image theology bears the closest possible relation. For Boehme, Christ is the second Adam, which means that Christ represents the restoration of the divine image occluded in the fall (*MM* 19, 21). This implies, obviously, that Christ brings into the fallen world an illumination in which divine presence is a constant and a perfection of will in which will lets the Second Principle be an element of transformation and renewal in a broken life. As the second Adam, Christ also represents the perfection of discourse, the resumption of the power of language to render reality, especially divine reality, transparent. In this sense, Christ is the foundation of the "language of nature" that in another sense discloses Jesus as the merciful center of reality (*MM* 36, 50–53). The reemergence of an effective divine image in Christ involves the overcoming of the corruptibility of the flesh that is the result of the *turba* (*MM* 10, 56; *TP* 14, 48) and the irruption into history of the *soma pneumatikon* (*MM* 41, 11). Christ also represents the overcoming of sexual differentiation involved in the Adamic fall (*MM* 19, 7; 55, 20; 56, 20; 56, 46; *IV* bk 1. 8, 13) and the coincidence of fire and light that characterizes the androgynous state of Adam (*MM* 19, 17; 22, 43–44). Christ, then, represents the restoration of the *kairos* of Eden, where *kairos* is dependent on the presence of paradise and the expression of eternity in time (*MM* 36 and 39). At the same time, Christ points forward to the eschatological, communitarian realization of the divine image.

It is important to underscore here that the relation between Christ and Sophia is not simply inferential—that is, derivable from the Adam-Christ analogy. Far from it, the sophiological parameter of christological depiction is everywhere to the fore. Mary is not in any real sense the *theotokos*. In continuity with Eckhartian lines of exploration, Mary is the mother of the human Jesus.[45] The eternal Christ is given birth to only in the deepest recesses of Mary's soul, where Wisdom resides. Wisdom is the matrix of the birth of the Logos. Although Jesus is male, the Logos represents the coincidence of masculine will and feminine Wisdom, fire and light, or fire and water. Boehme's intentions are clearly anti-docetic. He wants to insist on the humanness of Mary and Jesus, and he operates in terms of the Alexandrian axiom that what Christ

does not assume, he cannot save. When Boehme is hesitant regarding Christ's sharing the sinful human condition, he is simply at one with the Christian tradition in general, and his own Lutheran tradition in particular. But when he denies that Christ is literally corruptible, or exposed to death in anything that bears an analogy to our own postfall situation, then he definitely hugs the shore of Docetism. At the same time, he does everything he can to escape. The main strategy of escape is the hyperrealistic, apocalyptic focusing of Christ resisting the forces of evil. The dragon of Revelation and the principalities and powers of Colossians are obviously in the background, as is Luther's theology of *Christus Victor*. Christ, in any event, is involved in a transcosmic battle: "It is a battle between yes and no, between typical wrath and typical love, between the First and Second Principles" (*TF* 11, 14–15).

As such, Christ is the decision in the world between hell and heaven (*TF* 11, 15–20). Nevertheless, Boehme resolutely refuses to think of this agon in terms of sacrifice, or in terms of the conferring of merit. If Christ is the lamb, the lamb does not sacrifice himself for the sins of the world (*SR* 12, 3ff.). Vicarious atonement absolves human beings from responsibility for sin. And Boehme is dead set against forensic justification, for it is not only responsibility that is impugned, but also finite freedom. Not surprisingly, his antipredestination tract, *De Electione Gratiae*, is most eloquent on the topic: "For imputed grace from without is of no effect. . . . The imputed grace must be manifested in us, in the inward ground of the soul, and be one life. . . . If Christ is not in our soul, there is no grace nor forgiveness of sins" (*EG* 13, 7ff; also *IV* bk 3. 1, 2).

Christ, then, is the historically exemplary pattern of life that transforms no into yes, wrath into love, death into life. Christ is the real symbol of the pattern of *enantiodromia* at the level of eternity. The reality of the symbol is predicated on the Christ event integrating what had been sundered in the Adamic fall, and, in a sense, healing the wound of determinate eternal Wisdom, incurred in the Lucifernian fall. Healing the wound involves a metamorphosis of matter, as well as fundamental changes on the level of will and knowing.

One can speak, then, literally, and not simply metaphorically, of a new heaven and a new earth (see Revelation 21), for there is a transfiguration into an eternal milieu that has shape and form, and is bodily in the sense that it is the receptacle and mirror of divine expressivity. On the level of spirituality, to live in Christ is to take on the pain of transformation, focused in repentance and conversion as critical stages on the way to perfection. As Boehme depicts it in *The Way to Christ* (*Christosophia*), for instance, there is a definite order of salvation *(ordo salutis)* in following the christic pattern from repentance to regeneration that affects will and knowledge, indeed the very basis of the self. The main point that should not be forgotten here, however, is that Christ redeems only if human beings open themselves up to grace by overcoming self-will

(*Eigenwille*), and on the basis of death of self come to function as agents in the imitation of Christ. Boehme is hardly being original here, and the death of self is perhaps the central motif of the fifteenth-century mystical text *German Theology*, appropriated by Luther and the other illuminists before him. Importantly, however, the trope is figured differently in Boehme and comes to acquire cosmogonic and eternal resonance that will be picked up later by authors as different as Blake and Hegel.

(6) *Eschatology and Narrative Circularity*

Boehme's most comprehensive reflection on the imitation of Christ—that is, *The Way to Christ*—is, obviously, a text of individual piety, a text of prayer, and a set of discourses evocative of the *Gelassenheit* or "letting be" that makes possible the restoration of image. In this respect, the text can be paired with the work of his contemporary, Johann Arndt.[46] But to identify Boehme's view of redemption with that found in Arndt would be to ignore Boehme's panoramic view of history and to insufficiently appreciate the communitarian and eschatological dimensions of Boehme's sophiological depiction of Christ. Christ is the pivot of human history. He is constitutive of the restoration of Eden, and via this restoration, Christ is constitutive of the restoration of the integrity of paradise disturbed in the Lucifernian fall. The wholeness of paradise as well as Eden is anticipated in Christ, a wholeness realized only in the eschaton when what can be transformed is transformed, and what cannot be transformed is sloughed off. In the meantime there is the stress of the agon between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil, or the battle between those who have given themselves to the Second Principle and those who have delivered themselves up to the First.

But as Boehme points out, this postincarnational battle is continuous with the agon that structures all of history. Cain and Abel figure history: the line of rejection and the line of promise (*MM* 26–28). The figuration is familiarly Augustinian, with the difference that the lines themselves are not the results of divine election to salvation or damnation, but rather the results of human choices. And, of course, there is at best no one-to-one correspondence between the Kingdom of God and the visible church or churches, the "stone houses" (*MM* 40, 98), as Boehme calls them, for the Kingdom may well be invisible throughout history and only visible eschatologically. And, at worst, there is flagrant contradiction between the invisible and visible Church, which latter is the "Babylonian whore" or "dragon" to be expelled by the lamb.[47]

Boehme's criticisms against the visible Churches are constant from *Aurora* on, and range from not unexpected lambastings of the Roman Church to general outrage at the rampant sectarian strife of his age, where politics and religion are confused, and religion is effectively reduced to particular beliefs that mark off one sect from another. For Boehme, Christianity is not a doctrinal religion, but

a religion of internal transformation and, finally, a religion of speculative vision. True faith, which is neither historical knowledge nor subscription to articles (*IV* bk 3. 1, 2–4), issues in a vision not only of what the divine works in an individual human being, but what the divine works in history and in all of eternity.

Boehme's figuration of history is complex. The Cain-Abel figuration throws into relief what ultimately is at stake in a temporal existence destined to be sublated into eternity. Read from the vantage point of the eschaton, the Cain-Abel figuration, with Christ as the realization of Abel, has to be regarded as primary. But Boehme also articulates another figuration that takes the human world of venality more into account, as well as possibilities of vision repressed by the Cain-Abel pattern. This figuration, which finds its focus in the three Sons of Noah—Ham, Japhet, and Shem (*MM* 34)—with Ham and Shem oriented toward the First and Second Principles respectively, and with Japhet oriented toward the Third, is almost as fundamental. Of course, the orientation toward the flesh and the world that is typical of Japhet persists in postincarnational history, and it is only eschatologically revoked, for the eschaton is the moment of fundamental option for the First and Second Principles. The triadic pattern allows the visionary or prophetic element to stand out more clearly than the Cain-Abel contrast allows. For Shem, who is in Enoch's line (*MM* 30-31), and those visionaries in the line of Shem, live in the light of grace rather than nature[48]—a light which, however, comprehends and embraces the light of nature and enables an all-encompassing seeing (*MM* 34, 25; 34, 31).

The eschaton, with its circling back to Eden, abolishes the line of history. The eschaton also involves a circling back to eternity after an interval of posthistorical existence. The apocalyptic cast of Boehme's thought is here writ large: *Endzeit* repeats *Urzeit*, and recapitulated *Urzeit* folds into paradise, the mirror of determinate divine Wisdom shivered in the fall of Lucifer. Formally, at least, Boehme's great devotee and first biographer, Abraham von Franckenberg, is right when he insists on the importance of circularity in Boehme's thought.[49] But this raises the question of whether the circularity involves perfect parity between *Endzeit* and *Urzeit*, or whether there is some excess in *Endzeit* over *Urzeit*. There is some reason to favor the latter option, for the Christic pattern that articulates and shapes experience subsequent to the loss of innocence suggests nonsymmetry between *Endzeit* and *Urzeit*. It is only proper to point out, however, that the recapitulative notes are stronger in Boehme than they will be in thinkers like Hegel and Schelling.

This naturally leads back to the general issue of divine development on the plane of eternity. From the Unground to the divine milieu or paradise the divine enacts a story that is constitutive of divine self-identity. This story seems to be at once eventful and episodic, and an explication of the conditions of authentic divinity. Certainly, divine definition is always anticipated, and the teleological nexus always guarantees that whatever species of fall and

alienation occur, the divine process of realizing maximal incidences of being, knowing, value, and existence will not be frustrated, indeed, is assured of a happy outcome. Boehme articulates, therefore, a divine comedy. If by and large the divine comedy is completed on the level of eternity, and specifically with the Second Principle, the temporal world or the Third Principle also plays a role insofar as it repairs the perforated wholeness of the mirror of divine expression in paradise.[50]

In as brief a compass as is possible, I have offered an outline of Boehme's circular yet developmental narrative ontotheology. Obviously, the asceticism exercised with respect to quotation and the trimming of detail has palpable effects on the communication of the flavor of Boehme's discourse. I confess that I am prepared to make this sacrifice in the service of revealing its underlying narrative commitment and structure, which I wager will help to show that Boehme's discourse is much more important, both systematically and historically, than most of his supporters have dared to entertain. The rest of this text, and especially Parts II and III represent a multifaceted investigation of the narrative structure that I have presented in outline.

Before I conclude this chapter, however, I wish to draw attention to two distinctive aspects of Boehme's ontotheological narrative. The first aspect is more or less lexical. As with the Bible and other religious texts, a number of symbolic oppositions move Boehme's narrative discourse along. What is different in Boehme's texts is how the symbolic oppositions get narratively coded by suggesting that one is the narrative presupposition of the other. The second is more substantive, and concerns the way in which Boehme's discourse tries to provide a trinitarian synopsis or configuration of a six-stage narrative ontotheology.

1.2. Narrative Teleology: Narrative Codes

Boehme's divine comedy, which flirts with tragedy, but is finally not so, is discursively moved by narrative codes, of which the ocular code, the codes of weight and nothing, the organic and speech codes, and the code of gender are the most salient. More specifically, the divine comedy is articulated by means of narratively coded binary contrasts of seeing and blindness, darkness and light, weight and airiness, nothing and something, life and death, naming and unnaming, and finally masculine and feminine, where the divine feminine is interpreted in the most negative as well as the most positive terms.

Concretely, this means that as Boehme plots the development of the divine, authentic divine seeing realized in Eternal Freedom presupposes the blindness of Eternal Nature, just as this blindness succeeds the empty seeing of the Unground and the Quaternity.[51] Still within the ocular parameter, Boehme opines that real divine light presupposes the darkness that succeeds

the insufficient light of the Unground and the Quaternity, which, to mark off from the light (*Licht*) grounded in darkness (*SPT* 1.1, 32; 1.1, 38), Boehme refers to as "clarity" (*Klarheit*) (*SPT* 1.1, 10; also *SR* 14, 23). All manifestation, therefore, takes place against the tug of immanifestation. Similarly with the other narrative codes. The weightiness or substantiality (*MM* 3, 16; *SPT* 1. 1, 42) of Eternal Nature adds a gravitas to the divine not present at the level of the inessential or ethereal divine, and serves as a condition for the emergence of an ontologically "weighty" form of spiritual divine being in the Second Principle in general and the heavenly Eve of paradise in particular, which are intrinsically light and buoyant. At the same time, the "something" (*Ichts*) of Eternal Nature (*MM* 3, 5) obviates the regime of the nothing (*Nichts*) that is still showing signs of influence in the Quaternity. In turn, this something-nothing is negated and transcended by Eternal Freedom, which, as will, is a nothing having become determinate through the something (*Ichts*) of Eternal Nature.

Matters are not different with respect to the organic and speech codes. The entire divine movement is understood in terms of growth and birth (*Geburt*) (*MM* 1, 2; 1, 8; 2, 1). Life, for Boehme, is the ultimate specification of growth, and for life to be strong, it requires death (*SR* 3, 27; 8, 6–7). The death that belongs to Eternal Nature represents the overcoming of the lifelessness of the divine at the level of the Unground and the Quaternity, and serves as the condition for the elevation of life. Again, there are realized and unrealized forms of speech. For Boehme, the Johannine Logos is the ground of speaking, the Spirit is this speaking, and Wisdom is what is spoken (*MM* 2, 7). Yet, if this speech represents a transcendence of the silence and ineffability of the Unground, it is made truly effective only through the cacophony, deafness, and dumbness of Eternal Nature. True speech is uttered against the backdrop of a refusal of speech. Speech is always in some sense a victory.

This brings us to the last of the narrative codes—that of gender, and specifically the feminine. As observed already, Wisdom is the feminine pole in a primordial binary pair that has the Unground as Father as the other pole. Wisdom is also the feminine complement to a trinitarian process of differentiation, which if it revises the Father, Son, and Spirit language of the traditional Trinity, nevertheless, emphasizes the masculine activity of trinitarian differentiation over the feminine passivity of Wisdom as the completion of the Quaternity (*Clavis* #5, 15–19). Wisdom is also the feminine complement to Christ and Spirit in the domain of Eternal Freedom, where the divine has transcended the catastrophe of Eternal Nature. And, finally, as the eternal feminine or paradise, Wisdom is a fully realized presence in Christ (*Way to Christ* [*WC*], 154), a splendid presence in Adamic human being, an occasional presence in existences that must suffer the ambiguities of history (*WC*, 57, 61–62), and once again, a pleromatic presence in the eschatological situation. Enjoying a multitude of roles in the unfolding of an encompassing narrative of the divine, the

divine feminine plays a role in theological reflection that it has not had since the early centuries of the Common Era.

Moreover, the divine feminine is complexly qualified. As the aboriginal mirror, Wisdom is positively interpreted, though Boehme, as I pointed out, adds caveats regarding her ability to be a real site of multiplicity and reflection. But as Eternal Nature, the eternal feminine is such a real source, but it is also a sphere of chaos and nonillumination. Eternal Nature is the antithesis to the Wisdom of the Quaternity. As the realization of a divine world or paradise, Wisdom, however, represents the other to Eternal Nature and its transmutation. Its manifestation in the world of Eden, in Christ, in visionaries, and in the eschaton are all superbly positive, such positives in fact helping to set the frame of reference for Russian sophiological thought at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The realization of Wisdom is the realization of the "Kingdom of God" and the "body of God," the matrix of manifestation necessary for divine perfection.
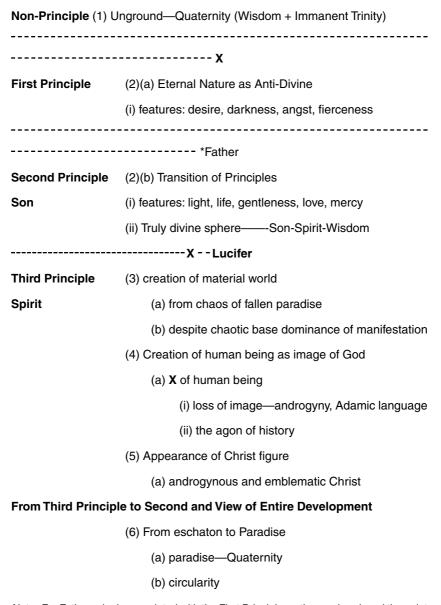
1.3. Trinitarian Configuration of Ontotheological Narrative

As suggested by the nineteenth-century historian of dogma Ferdinand Christian Baur in *Die christliche Gnosis* (pp. 557-611), the texts of the mature Boehme attempt a trinitarian synopsis or configuration of a complex, absolutely comprehensive narrative of divine manifestation or self-manifestation. The specific form of trinitarian language that Boehme most commonly avails himself of is that of three Principles, though in line with *Aurora* (12ff.) Boehme continues to think of the three Principles as three Kingdoms, and often uses the language of kingdom to interpret the language of principle. Leaving in parenthesis for the moment the way in which the three principles actually cut up the six-stage narrative or metanarrative, there are any number of complexities in Boehmian use both with respect to coherence and Christian legitimation. It would be stretching things to call Boehme's synopsizing of ontotheological narrative by three Principles trinitarian unless there were some rough correspondence between the three Principles (or Kingdoms) and Father, Son, and Spirit. Some rough correspondence exists, but so also do difficulties in correlation. This difficulty is especially acute with respect to the correlation of the First Principle and the Father, for having essentially equated the First Principle with Eternal Nature, Boehme seems in turn to be in two minds: whether to associate or separate Eternal Nature from Luther's God of Wrath (*Zorngott*). No more need be said on this point for the moment, since this relation-separation of Eternal Nature and the *Zorngott* is best discussed in the context of an overall treatment of the massive transformation on the standard Christian picture enacted by Boehme's metanarrative. This will be the topic of Part II of the present text.

With traditional use serving as a touchstone, Boehme's trinitarian language shows some odd features. Though apparently the 'economic' correlative to the 'Immanent Trinity,' the three Principles or Kingdoms do not admit of an 'economic' appraisal—that is, unless 'economic' is read much more literally than it usually is in trinitarian theology. At the very minimum the First and Second Principles do not represent distinct missions of fully constituted persons. Not only are there no such fully constituted persons, or even a single person, before divine enactment in the First and Second Principles, but both Principles are the privileged domains of divine manifestation in eternity rather than in time. Indeed, it is questionable whether even the Third Principle, associated with the Spirit, is 'economic' without remainder. First, the temporal world is not so much defined as the domain of the activity of Spirit as identified with the Spirit (with the Spirit, however, being the "Spirit of the World"). Second, if the temporal world does provide the scene for salvation history, this salvation history seems to play some role with respect to divine self-definition, more conspicuously in operation in the case of the first two Principles. It does so to the extent to which it contributes to the reconstitution of the divine milieu, which itself is constitutive of divine self-definition.

All three Principles, then, seem to play a role in divine self-development, and thus they are noneconomic, whether 'economic' is given essentially an Augustinian or Joachimite reading. This noneconomic (in the sense of nonmissional) view of principle does, indeed, represent a sea change from Boehme's earliest use of the trinitarian language of Kingdom. In *Aurora* 12, spurred on by Revelation, with a possible assist from Colossians 1.16, Boehme speaks of the three Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Michael, Lucifer, and Uriel. The angelological characterization of three Kingdoms, however, turns out to be relative, with the ultimate referents of the three Kingdoms being the Father, Son, and Spirit respectively. Leaving aside the tantalizing correlation between the Son and Lucifer enunciated in the text, and repeated by more than one Hegelian text,[52] it is clear that against the backdrop of a personalist rendition of the Trinity *in se*, Boehme's elaboration of the three Kingdoms here is more nearly economic and missional than his later work, though its economic mode of distribution is recognizably more Joachimite than Augustinian. Attributions made of Michael, Lucifer, and Uriel seem to be real rather than a matter of appropriation, and their activities discrete rather than mutually involving or perichoretic.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to say that traces of the economic or missional view continue to be recalled in Boehme's mature work to the extent to which the three Principles do not touch on the Unground, Wisdom, and especially on the trinitarian articulation of will. The trinitarian articulation does serve as condition for the emergence of the three Principles. But its anticipatory role does not redound to its credit. It too serves as a means for the realization of divine self-consciousness, only it does not perform the kind of ontotheological

Non-Principle (1) Unground—Quaternity (Wisdom + Immanent Trinity)

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First Principle   (2)(a) Eternal Nature as Anti-Divine

                          (i) features: desire, darkness, angst, fierceness

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-------------------------- *Father

Second Principle   (2)(b) Transition of Principles

Son   (i) features: light, life, gentleness, love, mercy

                          (ii) Truly divine sphere——-Son-Spirit-Wisdom

---------------------------------**X** - -**Lucifer**

Third Principle   (3) creation of material world

Spirit   (a) from chaos of fallen paradise

                                 (b) despite chaotic base dominance of manifestation

                          (4) Creation of human being as image of God

                                 (a) **X** of human being

                                        (i) loss of image—androgyny, Adamic language

                                        (ii) the agon of history

                                 (5) Appearance of Christ figure

                                        (a) androgynous and emblematic Christ

From Third Principle to Second and View of Entire Development

                                 (6) From eschaton to Paradise

                                        (a) paradise—Quaternity

                                        (b) circularity

Note: F = Father, who is associated with the First Principle on the one hand, and the point of transition between the First and Second Principles, on the other. Also the letter X is the symbol for fall.

Figure 1.1. Boehme's Trinitarian mapping of inclusive ontotheological narrative.

service offered by the three Principles, and especially the first two. As a means, the trinitarian articulation of will is not a foundation. But the trinitarian articulation of Principles (as a means) does serve as a foundation of the divine self, who is maximal realization of being, knowing, value, and existence.

One of the ways of thinking of the relation between Boehme and Hegel, who according to Baur in *Die Christliche Gnosis* represents the apogee of theogonically-inclined trinitarian articulation of an encompassing ontotheological narrative (pp. 665–735), is that all traces of immanent-economic trinitarian distinction collapse, since nothing remains outside the trinitarian becoming of the divine itself. Thus there is the excision in Hegel of the divine nothing or the immanifest divine (what I called in *The Heterodox Hegel*, *apophatic erasure*[53]), for the divine is always *arche*, always the process of manifestation. And thus also, there is in Hegel the interpretation of the trinitarian movement before the emergence of nature as a real source of multiplicity and dialectic. This trinitarian movement is for Hegel the first act of divine manifestation rather than the rehearsal it is in Boehme. I will have more to say on this important topic in a later volume on Hegel, when the relation between Hegel and Boehme will be treated *in extenso*.

Before I move on, however, from Boehme's use of the language of the Trinity, perhaps it would be useful to provide a schematization of his trinitarian scaping of the encompassing narrative of divine self-constitution.